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ABSTRACT

According to the 22nd annual survey of entering freshmen in the United States, freshman interest in teaching careers has increased by more than two-thirds since 1982. However, this level of interest still falls short of the projected demand. The 1987 data also suggest potential problems with future supplies of certain technology and health care professionals. Interest in nursing among freshman women has fallen by more than half in 4 years, to 4%. Engineering and technology continue to show sharp declines among both sexes, although interest is higher now among women than 10 years ago. Freshman interest in engineering has fallen by more than a fourth since 1982, and in computing by more than two-thirds in the same period. Among freshman women, the career preference for medicine almost equals the interest in nursing. Business continues to be the most preferred career among freshmen, and being financially well off is one of the top personal life goals. Among political preferences, "middle-of-the-road" is still the largest category among freshmen, although they strongly endorse a number of traditionally liberal issues. The 1987 data also suggest that freshman participation in government aid programs may have stabilized after six years of steady decline. An American Council on Education press release on this report is attached. (KM)

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COOPERATIVE INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH PROGRAM

American Council on Education/University of California, Los Angeles

1987 Freshman Survey Report

INTEREST IN TEACHING CAREERS RISING; TECHNOLOGY AND NURSING CAREERS FALLING SHARPLY

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COOPERATIVE INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH PROGRAM

American Council on Education/University of California, Los Angeles

1987 FRESHMAN SURVEY REPORT

Interest in Teaching Careers Rising; Technology and Nursing Careers Falling Sharply

Freshman interest in teaching careers has increased by more than two-thirds since 1982, according to the 22nd annual survey of entering freshmen conducted jointly by UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute and the American Council on Education. In Fall 1987, 8.1 percent of the students entering college planned to pursue careers as elementary or secondary school teachers, up from 7.3 percent last year and the low point of 4.7 percent in 1982.

"The 1987 data show that students again see viable career opportunities in teaching," says UCLA Professor Alexander W. Astin, director of the study. "The overall climate is good for future teachers: the public is once again interested in education, salaries are up, the jobs are there, and the demographics point to continuing strong demand."

The current level of student interest in teaching still falls short of the projected demand and is far below the all-time high recorded in 1968 when 23.5 percent of the entering freshmen (and 37.5 percent of the freshman women) expressed interest in teaching careers. "However," notes Astin, "the increases are in part the result of the growing public concern that has been stimulated in recent years by the publication of several national reports on the quality of American education. Since then, widespread publicity about curricular reform and quality initiatives, coupled with higher salaries for starting teachers and growing awareness about a coming teacher shortage, have stimulated increased interest in education careers among college students."

While the news about education careers is encouraging, the 1987 data suggest potential problems with future supplies of certain technology and health care professionals. Interest in nursing careers among freshman women has fallen by more than half in four years, to 4.0 percent in 1987, down from 5.1 percent in 1986, 8.4 percent in 1983, and the peak of 10.2 percent in 1974. Interest in medical careers among all freshmen has also dropped recently, to 3.5 percent in 1987, down from 3.7 percent last year and the peak of 4.0 percent in 1984.

Engineering and technology continue to show sharp declines: freshman interest in engineering has fallen by more than a fourth since 1982, while preference for computing careers has declined by more than two-thirds during the same period. In 1987, only 8.5 percent of the entering freshmen expressed interest in engineering careers, down from 9.7 last year and well below the 12.0 percent planning to pursue engineering careers in 1982. Similarly, computing careers (as a programmer or systems analyst) now account for just 2.7 percent of the entering freshman choices, down from 3.5 percent last year and 8.8 percent in 1982. Similar declines were noted in the proportions of freshmen planning to major in computer science and engineering.

"The continuing declines in computing, engineering, and nursing point to critical supply problems in these professions," says Kenneth C. Green, associate director of the study. "The drop in freshman interest in computing and engineering comes at a time of increased national concern about international competitiveness and the role of science and technology in the nation's economic development. As for nursing, this year's survey results portend further enrollment problems for the nation's nursing programs and staffing difficulties for the nation's hospitals."

"Our data indicate that among all freshman women the career preference for medicine almost equals the interest in nursing. And in four-year institutions more women would prefer to become doctors than nurses," says Green. In 1987, nearly equal proportions of men and women hope to become physicians (3.6 percent for men and 3.3 percent for women). This reflects a dramatic change from past years. For example, 3.9 percent of the freshman men and 2.5 percent of the freshman women hoped to become physicians in 1977, compared to 6.4 percent of the men and only 1.5 percent of the women in 1967.

Although more women are now interested in engineering and computing than ten years ago, the recent declines in freshman interest in these careers occurs among both sexes. The proportion of freshman women interested in engineering increased almost twentyfold between 1966 and 1982, from 0.2 to 3.6 percent of the women entering college. However, between 1982 and 1987, the proportion of freshman women planning to pursue engineering careers has dropped by more than one-quarter, to 2.6 percent. The decline among men between 1982 and 1987 has also been roughly one-quarter, from 20.6 to 15.2 percent.

Freshman interest in computing careers among both sexes rose dramatically between 1978 and 1982, and has declined just as suddenly since then. For men, interest in computing careers increased from 3.2 percent in 1977 to 10.2 percent in 1983 and has dropped back to 3.7 percent in 1987. Among freshman women, the rise and fall pattern has been quite similar, beginning at 2.4 percent in 1977, rising to 8.0 percent in 1982, and dropping to 1.8 percent this past year.

Business continues to attract more students. Still the most preferred career among college freshmen, business reached another all-time high in Fall 1987, rising to 24.6 percent, up from 24.1 percent last year and more than double the 1966 figure of 11.6 percent. The rising popularity of business among college freshmen is in part attributable to the growing number of women who plan to pursue business careers: this year 22.0 percent of freshman women plan to enter business careers, down slightly from 22.6 percent in 1986 but well ahead of the level recorded in 1980 (17.9 percent) and more

than six times the level recorded in 1966 (3.3 percent). Indeed, women now outnumber men in some business fields: for example, more freshman women than men plan to pursue careers in accounting (6.4 versus 5.3 percent, respectively).

Consistent with the rising preference for business careers, the 1987 data indicate that "being very well off financially" is one of the top personal goals of college freshmen. A record number (75.6 percent) of freshmen identify this as an essential or very important life goal in 1987, up from 73.2 percent last year, 70.9 percent in 1985, and nearly double the level recorded in 1970 (39.1 percent). Other top priorities for this year's freshmen include "being an authority in my chosen field" (77.2 percent, up from 71.8 percent last year and 60.6 percent in 1972) and "having administrative responsibility for the work of others" (45.1 percent, up from 44.2 percent in 1986, and 34.4 in 1977). Additionally, the proportion of freshmen indicating that a key reason in their decision to attend college was "to make more money" reached a new high of 71.3 percent this year, up from 70.6 last year and only 49.9 percent in 1971.

In contrast with this strong commitment to financial goals, less than two-fifths (39.4 percent) of this year's freshmen identify "developing a meaningful philosophy of life" as an essential or very important life goal, down from 40.6 percent in 1986 and 82.9 percent in 1967. The life philosophy item fell to its lowest point in the history of the survey, while student support for "being very well off financially" reached its highest point this year. "These trends over the past twenty years," says Astin, "suggest a gradual but profound shift not only in students' values but also in the values of the larger society."

Despite the continuing public discussion about the apparent conservative mood on college campuses, the proportion of freshmen who identify themselves as politically conservative or far right has changed little in the past five years, hovering at about one-fifth of the freshman population (18.3 percent self-described conservatives in 1987, down from 18.7 percent last year and 19.6 in 1981; 1.3 percent described themselves as far right in 1987). The proportion identifying themselves as liberal has been rising slowly in recent years, up to 22.2 percent of the 1987 freshmen, a slight increase over last year (22.0 percent) and a substantial gain over the low of 18.1 percent posted in 1981. However, the proportion of liberal freshmen is well below the peak of 35.3 percent recorded in Fall 1971.

The political label that has experienced the most growth in recent years has been the middle-of-the-road category. Although the 1987 level of 56.0 percent is down somewhat from the peak of 60.3 percent recorded in 1980, it is still well above the levels noted in the early 1970s when just under half the entering freshmen (48.3 percent in 1972) identified their political position as middle-of-the road.

This year's freshmen strongly endorse a number of traditionally liberal issues. For example, more than half (58.7 percent) support legal abortion (virtually unchanged from last year at 58.6 percent), and three-fourths (73.8 percent) oppose increased defense spending (up from 73.1 percent last year and 61.2 percent in 1982). Additionally almost half (47.6 percent) agree that colleges should not invest endowment funds in companies that do business in South Africa.

Freshman support for "laws prohibiting homosexual relations" increased again this year, to 53.1 percent, up from 52.2 percent last year, and 47.9 percent in 1985. Prof. Astin notes that "this continuing support for laws outlawing homosexuality may reflect the growing public concern about AIDS." However, despite the widespread publicity about the threat of AIDS, the proportion of freshmen who agree that "if two people really like each other it's all right for them to have sex even if they have known each other for only a short time" reached a new high of 51.9 percent in 1987, up from 46.8 percent in 1984 (the last year the question was included on the survey) and 50.4 percent in 1977. "This suggests that while young people may be concerned about AIDS, they may not be adequately informed about the virus and their potential risk to exposure. Indeed, you could look at these data and think that entering freshmen have a 'can't happen to me' attitude about this disease," says Astin. He states that the survey results highlight the need for AIDS education programs in high schools and on college campuses.

An all-time high of 52.1 percent of the freshmen agree that "a couple should live together before marriage," up from 51.1 percent last year, 47.4 percent in 1985, and 48.3 percent in 1977. And a new item on "getting married" indicates that 59.9 percent of the 1987 freshmen identify this as an essential or very important life goal (57.1 percent of the men; 62.4 percent of the women).

Cigarette smoking continues to decline among entering freshmen. In 1987, only 8.9 percent of the entering students reported that they frequently smoked cigarettes, down from 9.8 percent last year, 13.9 percent in 1978, and 16.6 percent in 1966. Women are more likely to smoke than are men in 1987 (10.4 percent for women vs. 7.3 percent for men).

The 1987 data suggest that freshman participation in government aid programs may have stabilized after six years of steady decline. Freshman participation in the Pell Grant program rose slightly to 17.5 percent this fall, up from 16.9 percent last year but well below the 31.5 percent level recorded in 1980. Conversely, participation in the Guaranteed Student Loan (GSL) program dropped to 22.0 percent this year, down from 25.4 percent in 1986, but still higher than the 20.9 percent participation posted in 1980.

The 1987 national survey is based on questionnaires completed by 289,875 freshmen entering 562 two- and four-year colleges and universities. Of these, 209,627 questionnaires from 390 institutions were used to compute the 1987 national norms. The normative data presented here have been statistically adjusted to represent the nation's total population of 1.6 million first-time, full-time entering students. Freshmen are followed-up at regular intervals to assess changes that occur during the undergraduate years.

Copies of the report, titled *The American Freshman: National Norms for Fall 1987,* are available for $15.00 (postpaid) from the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA's Graduate School of Education, 405 Hilgard Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024-1521

THE COOPERATIVE INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH PROGRAM

The Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) is a national longitudinal study of American higher education. Established in 1966 by the American Council on Education (ACE), the CIRP is now the nation's largest and oldest continuing empirical study of American colleges and college students. Since 1966, some 7 million students, 100,000 faculty, and 1,300 institutions have participated in CIRP surveys.

The annual CIRP survey of entering freshmen is now administered through UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute, under the continuing sponsorship of the American Council on Education.

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320 Moore Hall
Los Angeles, CA 90024-1521
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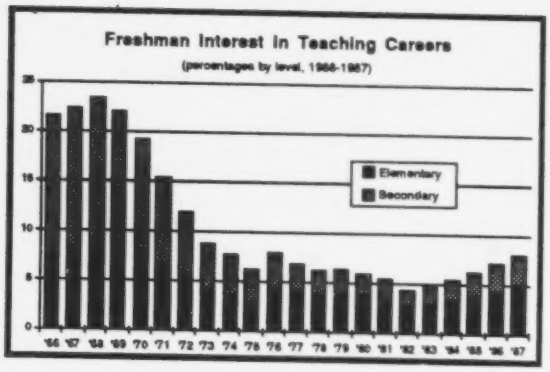
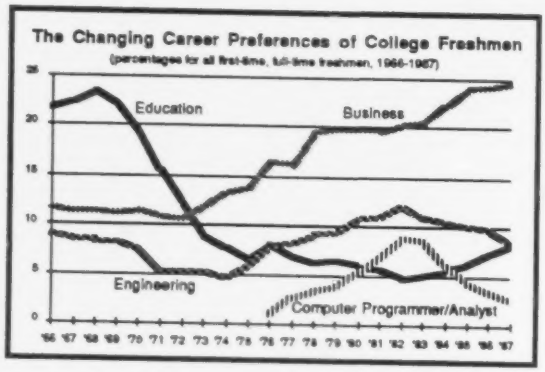
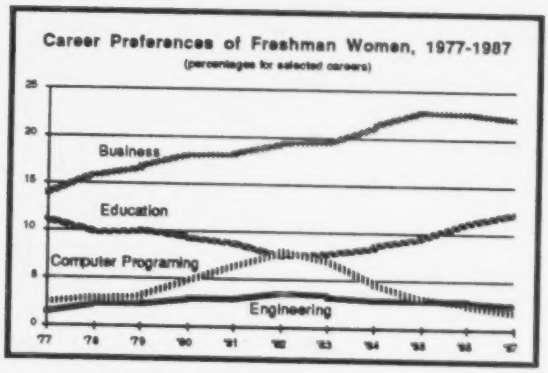
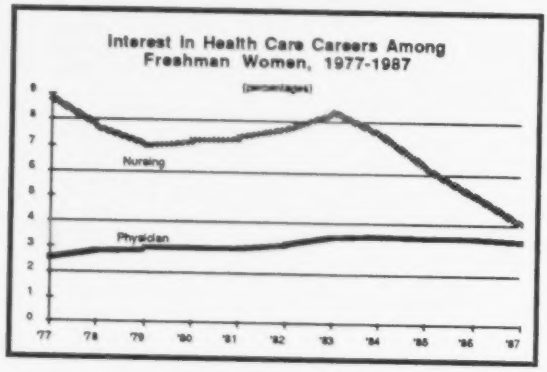
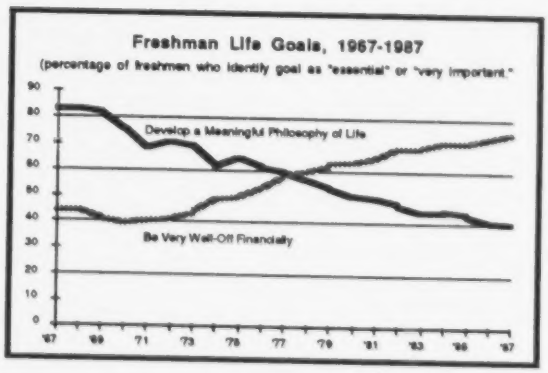
1987 Freshman Survey Data

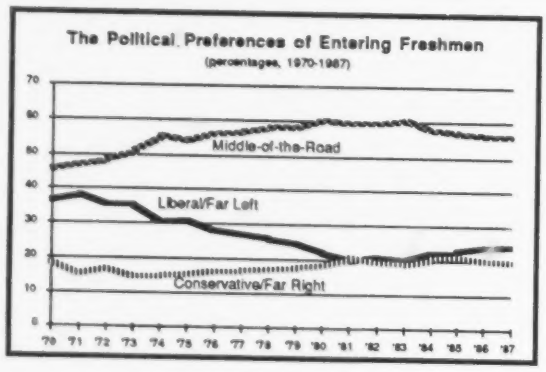


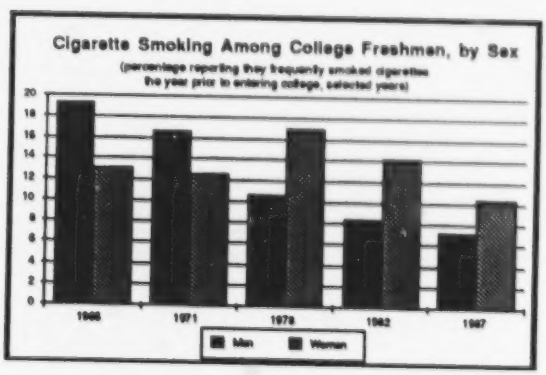


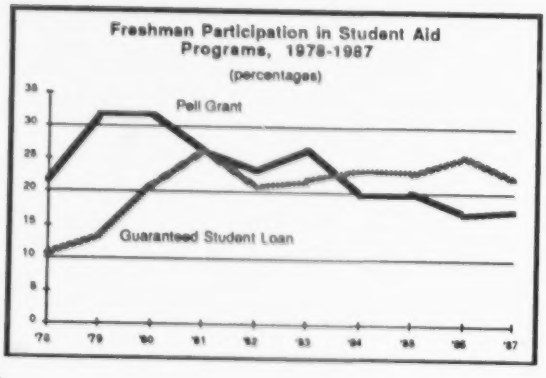





Freshman Life Goals, 1967-1987
(percentage of freshmen who identify goal as "essential" or "very important.")
Develop a Meaningful Philosophy of Life
Be Very Well-Off Financially




Cigarette Smoking Among College Freshmen, by Sex
(percentage reporting they frequently smoked cigarettes the year prior to entering college, selected years)
Men
Women



THE 1987 CIRP SURVEYS

The Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) and UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) will offer a freshman and follow-up survey in 1988. These studies, described below, are open to all two- and four-year colleges and universities.

Annual Freshman Survey

The annual American Council on Education/UCLA survey of entering college freshmen is the nation's largest and longest continuing empirical study of higher education. The survey covers an array of demographic, experiential, and attitudinal issues. The questionnaire also covers degree aspirations, major and career plans, and expectations about college. Participating institutions receive a campus profile report, plus national normative data. Institutions can merge their CIRP freshman survey data with other campus data (such as files from the registrar's office) to create a longitudinal data file to assist institutional research, planning efforts, and accreditation studies.

Follow-Up Survey

Designed specifically for institutions participating in the annual CIRP freshman survey, the Follow-Up provides a cost effective and efficient vehicle for campuses to conduct longitudinal studies of entering students. The survey focuses on student experiences during college, and includes items that measure satisfaction with key aspects of the college experience. The questionnaire also repeats several items from the freshman survey, thus providing data to measure change and campus impacts. The follow-up is particularly useful for retention studies, accreditation reports, and self-study assessments.

THE AMERICAN FRESHMAN TWENTY YEAR TRENDS

This comprehensive report summarizes the first twenty years of the CIRP freshman survey data. This report covers a wide range of issues: demographic characteristics, academic ability, student goals and aspirations, preferences for majors and careers, expectations of college, attitudes on political and social issues, and life goal questions. Separate sections provide the trends for men, women, and all freshmen.

Included with this report is an analytical essay that discusses the major changes in the freshman population over the past two decades. Written by UCLA Professor and CIRP Director Alexander W. Astin and CIRP Associate Director Kenneth C. Green, this essay provides a comprehensive assessment of the shifts in academic skills, demographic characteristics, degree aspirations, career preferences, personal goals, political attitudes, and individual values in the freshman population since 1966. The 21-page essay by Astin and Green includes 18 graphs.

The American Freshman: Twenty Year Trends is an invaluable resource for anyone with an interest in the recent history of American higher education. Available from UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute for $19.00 (postpaid). Contact the Institute for additional information about volume purchases and classroom discounts.

For additional information about these programs and publications, please contact the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA.

Order Form: *The American Freshman Reports*

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Interest in Teaching Careers Rising; Technology and Nursing Careers Falling Sharply

WASHINGTON, DC (Jan. 14, 1987) — Freshman interest in teaching careers has increased by more than two-thirds since 1982, according to the 22nd annual survey of entering freshmen conducted jointly by the American Council on Education and UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute. In Fall 1987, 8.1 percent of the students entering college planned to pursue careers as elementary or secondary school teachers, up from 7.3 percent last year and the low point of 4.7 percent in 1982.

"The 1987 data show that students again see viable career opportunities in teaching," says UCLA Graduate School of Education Professor Alexander W. Astin, director of the study. "The overall climate is good for future teachers: the public is once again interested in education, salaries are up, the jobs are there, and the demographics point to continuing strong demand.

"These increases are in part the result of the growing public concern that has been stimulated in recent years by the publication of several national reports on the quality of American education," says Astin. Since then, widespread publicity about curricular reform and quality initiatives, coupled with higher salaries for starting teachers and growing awareness about a coming teacher shortage, have stimulated increased interest in education careers among college students. However, Astin notes that the current level of student interest in teaching still falls short of the projected demand and is far below the all-time high recorded in 1968 when 23.5 percent of the entering freshmen (and 37.5 percent of the freshman women) expressed interest in teaching careers.

While the news about education careers is encouraging, the 1987 data suggest potential problems with future supplies of certain technology and health care professionals. Interest in nursing careers among freshman women has fallen by more than half in the past four years, to 4.0 percent in 1987, down from 5.1 percent in 1986, 8.4 percent in 1983, and the peak of 10.2 percent

— *more* —

in 1974. Interest in medical careers among all freshmen has also dropped recently, to 3.5 percent in 1987, down from 3.7 percent last year and the peak of 4.0 percent in 1984.

Engineering and technology continue to show sharp declines: freshman interest in engineering has fallen by more than a fourth since 1982, while the preference for computing careers has declined by more than two-thirds during the same period. In 1987, only 8.5 percent of the entering freshmen expressed interest in engineering careers, down from 9.7 percent last year and well below the 12.0 percent planning to pursue engineering careers in 1982. Similarly, computing careers (as a programmer or systems analyst) now account for just 2.7 percent of the entering freshman choices, down from 3.5 percent last year and 8.8 percent in 1982. Similar declines were noted in the proportions of freshmen planning to major in computer science and engineering.

"The continuing declines in computing, engineering, and nursing point to critical supply problems in these professions," says Kenneth C. Green, associate director of the study. "The drop in freshman interest in computing and engineering comes at a time of increased national concern about international competitiveness and the role of science and technology in the nation's economic development. As for nursing, this year's survey results portend further enrollment problems for the nation's nursing programs and staffing difficulties for the nation's hospitals.

"Our data indicate that the career preference for medicine almost equals the interest in nursing among all freshman women. And in four-year institutions, more women would prefer to become doctors than nurses," says Green. In 1987, nearly equal proportions of men and women hope to become physicians (3.6 percent for men and 3.3 percent for women). This reflects a dramatic change from past years. For example, 3.9 percent of the freshman men and 2.5 percent of the freshman women hoped to become physicians in 1977, compared to 6.4 percent for the men and only 1.5 percent for the women in 1967.

Although more women are now interested in engineering and computing than 10 years ago, the recent declines in freshman interest in these careers occur among both sexes. The proportion of freshman women interested in engineering increased almost twentyfold between 1966 and 1982, from 0.2 to 3.6 percent of the women entering college. However, between 1982 and 1987, the proportion of freshman women planning to pursue engineering careers has dropped by more than one-quarter, to 2.6 percent. The decline among men between 1982 and 1987 has also been roughly one-quarter, from 20.6 to 15.2 percent.

Freshman interest in computing careers among both sexes rose dramatically between 1978 and 1982, and has declined just as suddenly since then. For men, interest in computing careers increased from 3.2 percent in 1977 to 10.2 percent in 1982 and has dropped back to 3.7 percent in 1987. Among freshman women, the pattern has been quite similar, beginning at 2.4 percent in 1977, rising to 8.0 percent in 1982, and dropping to 1.8 percent this past year.

3-3-3-3 ***Interest in Teaching Careers Rising***

Business continues to attract more students. Still the most preferred career among college freshmen, business reached another all-time high in Fall 1987, rising to 24.6 percent, up from 24.1 percent last year and more than double the 1966 figure of 11.6 percent. The rising popularity of business among college freshmen is in part attributable to the growing number of women who plan to pursue business careers: this year 22.0 percent of freshman women plan to enter business careers, down slightly from 22.6 percent in 1986 but well ahead of the level recorded in 1980 (17.9 percent) and more than six times the level recorded in 1966 (3.3 percent). Indeed, women now outnumber men in some business fields: for example, more freshman women than men plan to enter accounting (6.4 vs. 5.3 percent, respectively).

Consistent with the rising preference for business careers, the 1987 data indicate that "being very well off financially" is one of the top personal goals of college freshmen. A record number (75.6 percent) of freshmen identify this as an essential or very important life goal in 1987, up from 73.2 percent last year, 70.9 percent in 1985, and nearly double the level recorded in 1970 (39.1 percent). Other top priorities for this year's freshmen include "being an authority in my chosen field" (77.2 percent, up from 71.8 percent last year and 60.6 percent in 1972) and "having administrative responsibility for the work of others" (45.1 percent, up from 44.2 percent in 1986, and 34.4 in 1977). Additionally, the proportion of freshmen indicating that a key reason in their decision to attend college was "to make more money" reached a new high of 71.3 percent this year, up from 70.6 percent last year and only 49.9 percent in 1971.

In contrast with this strong commitment to financial goals, less than two-fifths (39.4 percent) of this year's freshmen identify "developing a meaningful philosophy of life" as an essential or very important life goal, down from 40.6 percent in 1986 and 82.9 percent in 1967. The life philosophy item reached its lowest point in the history of the survey, while student support for "being very well off financially" reached its highest point this year. "These trends over the past 20 years," says Astin, "suggest a gradual but profound shift not only in students' values but also in the values of the larger society."

Despite the continuing public discussion about the apparent conservative mood on college campuses, the proportion of freshmen who identify themselves as politically conservative or far right has changed little in the past five years, accounting for about one-fifth of the freshman population (18.3 percent identify themselves as conservatives in 1987, down from 18.7 percent last year and 19.6 percent in 1981; 1.3 percent describe themselves as far right in 1987). The proportion describing themselves as liberals has been rising slowly in recent years, up to 22.2 percent of the 1987 freshmen, a slight increase over last year (22.0 percent) and a substantial gain over the low of 18.1 percent posted in 1981. However, the proportion of liberal freshmen is well below the peak of 35.3 percent recorded in 1971.

The political label that has experienced the most growth in recent years has been the middle-of-the-road category. Although the 1987 level of 56.0 percent is down somewhat from the peak of 60.3 percent recorded in 1980, it is still well above the levels noted in the early 1970s when just under half the entering freshmen (48.3 percent in 1972) identified their political position as middle-of-the-road.

This year's freshmen strongly endorse a number of traditionally liberal issues. For example, more than half (58.7 percent) support legal abortion (virtually unchanged from last year at 58.6 percent), and three-fourths (73.8 percent) oppose increased defense spending (up from 73.1 percent last year and 61.2 percent in 1982). And almost half (47.6 percent) agree that colleges should not invest endowment funds in companies that do business in South Africa.

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An all-time high of 52.1 percent of the freshmen agree that "a couple should live together before marriage," up from 51.1 percent last year, 47.4 percent in 1985, and 48.3 percent in 1977. And a new item on "getting married" indicates that 59.9 percent of the 1987 freshmen identify this as an essential or very important life goal (57.1 percent for men; 62.4 percent for women).

Cigarette smoking continues to decline among entering freshmen. In 1987, only 8.9 percent of the entering students reported that they frequently smoked cigarettes, down from 9.8 percent last year, 13.9 percent in 1978, and 16.6 percent in 1966. Women are more likely to smoke than are men in 1987 (10.4 percent for women vs. 7.3 percent for men).

The 1987 data suggest that freshman participation in government aid programs may have stabilized after six years of steady decline. Freshman participation in the Pell Grant program rose slightly to 17.5 percent this fall, up from 16.9 percent last year but well below the 31.5 percent level recorded in 1980. Conversely, participation in the Guaranteed Student Loan (GSL) program dropped to 22.0 percent this year, down from 25.4 percent in 1986, but higher than the 20.9 percent participation posted in 1980.

5-5-5-5 ***Interest in Teaching Careers Rising***

The 1987 national survey is based on questionnaires completed by 289,875 freshmen entering 562 two- and four-year colleges and universities. Of these, 209,627 questionnaires from 390 institutions were used to compute the 1987 national norms. The normative data presented here have been statistically adjusted to represent the nation's total population of 1.6 million first-time, full-time entering students. Freshmen are followed-up at regular intervals to assess changes that occur during the undergraduate years.

Copies of the report, titled *The American Freshman: National Norms for Fall 1987,* are available for $15 (postpaid) from the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA's Graduate School of Education, 405 Hilgard Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024.

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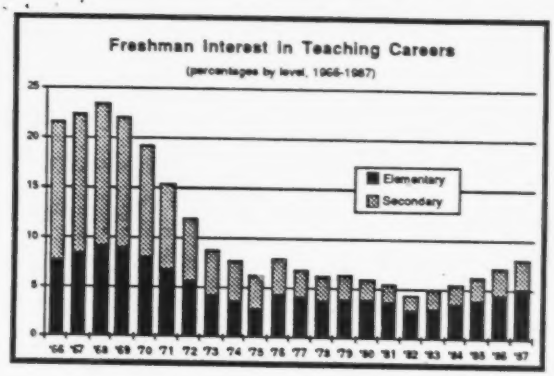
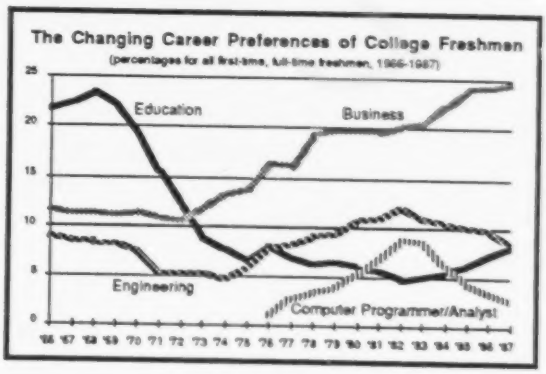
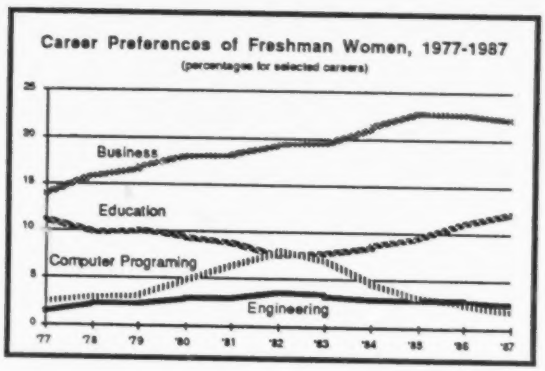
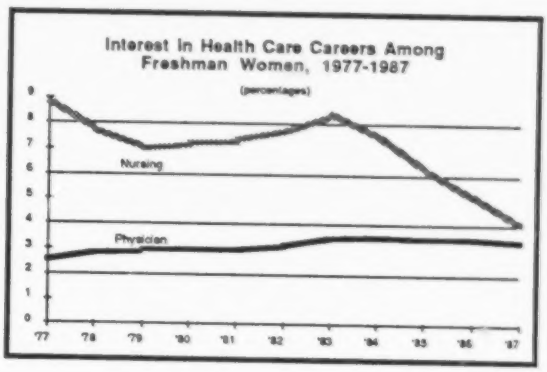
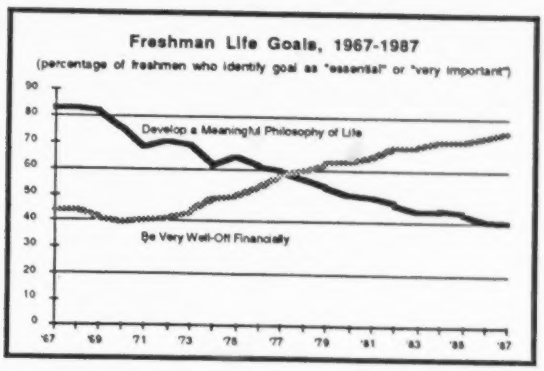
1987 Freshman Survey Data










Freshman Life Goals, 1967-1987
(percentage of freshmen who identify goal as "essential" or "very important")
Develop a Meaningful Philosophy of Life
Be Very Well-Off Financially